

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The final office action of November 3, 2004 has been carefully reviewed and these remarks are responsive thereto. Reconsideration and allowance of the instant application are respectfully requested. Claims 1-24 and 27 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 25, 26, 28 and 29 have been amended.

Applicants submitted an Information Disclosure Statement on July 6, 2004 in the instant application and the last office action failed to return an initialed copy of form PTO/SB/08A indicating that the references cited therein have been considered and made of record. Applicants respectfully request that an initialed copy of form PTO/SB/08A be returned with the next communication in the instant application. In the event that the Examiner needs a copy of this form, he is invited to contact the undersigned at the number identified below.

Applicants note with appreciation that the application contains allowable subject matter. Specifically, claims 26 and 29 have been objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to incorporate the features of their ultimate base claim. Accordingly, applicants have rewritten claims 26 and 29 in independent form to place them in condition for allowance.

Claims 24-25 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. patent 5,809,331 to Staats et al. ("Staats") in view of U.S. patent no. 5,339,432 to Crick ("Crick"). Claims 27-28 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Staats in view of Crick and further in view of U.S. patent no. 5,815,678 to Hoffman et al. ("Hoffman"). The rejections of claims 24 and 27 are deemed moot as these claims have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 25 and 28 have been amended to depend from claims 26 and 29, respectively, and are patentably distinct from the cited art for the same reasons as claim their respective base claim.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that no fee is required for this submission. If any fees are required or if an overpayment is made, the Commissioner is authorized to debit or credit our Deposit Account No. 19-0733, accordingly.

Appln. No.: 09/604,365
Amendment dated November 17, 2004
Reply to Office Action of November 3, 2004

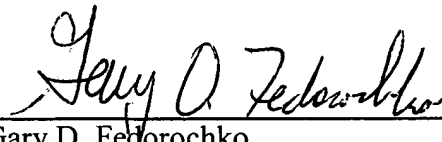
All objections and rejections having been addressed, applicants respectfully submit that the instant application is in condition for allowance, and respectfully solicit prompt notification of the same.

Respectfully submitted,

BANNER & WITCOFF, LTD.

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